Department of Justice Canada | Ministère de la Justice Canada

Canada

Speaking Notes for
THE HONOURABLE ROB NICHOLSON, P.C., Q.C.,
M.P. for Niagara Falls
Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada
for the
Announcement of the *Tackling Violent Crime Act*

Ottawa , Ontario
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Introduction

Good morning, ladies and gentlemen.

I am pleased to be here joined by my colleagues Minister Day, Minister Blackburn and Minister Fortier.

I am also pleased that with us today are so many important stakeholders.

I would like to acknowledge and thank my provincial counterpart – the Honourable Dave Chomiak the Manitoba Minister of Justice for being here today.

As recently announced, I will be moving forward with many of the justice agenda items of concern to Manitoba.

I would also like to thank Margaret Miller, the National President of Mothers Against Drunk Driving, for coming today.

Sadly, on May 16th, 2004, Margaret Miller's son, Springhill Police Constable Bruce Miller, was killed in an impaired driving accident in Caledonia, P.E.I.

Today would have been Bruce's 30th birthday and yet, despite having family plans for this day, she has travelled to Ottawa to be part of this announcement.

Thank you for coming today, Margaret.

Canada□s New Government Taking Action

Today, our Government is taking action toward tackling violent crime in Canada.

Time and time again, Canadians have said that they want a strong criminal justice system.

And during the last campaign, our Government was elected in part on our promise of safer communities.

Canadians have told us that they want to see action. They want us to move quickly and decisively to tackle crime and make our communities safer.

They are fed up with a justice system that puts the rights of criminals ahead of the rights of law-abiding citizens.

Fed up with a revolving door bail system and soft sentences for serious offenders.

And fed up with feeling unsafe in their homes and public places.

Holding Opposition to Account

Canadians want us to move quickly and decisively to tackle violent crime.

Our Government is serious about the need to better:

- protect youth from sexual predators;
- protect our communities from dangerous offenders;
- get serious with drug impaired drivers; and,
- toughen sentencing and bail for those who commit serious gun crimes.

And we have made some progress, but we haven't been able to go as far as Canadians have wanted us to go.

This is why, moments ago, we introduced the ***Tackling Violent Crime Act***

Bill C-2 is a comprehensive bill that addresses a number of significant issues that were extensively debated in the previous session of Parliament – in some cases, for a year or more.

It also reflects amendments previously made by the House of Commons on each measure.

Violent Sex Offences

Under the proposed legislation, those who have been convicted of certain violent or sexual offences three or more times would be required to prove to the court why they should not be designated as Dangerous Offenders.

Age of Consent

The age of consent for non-exploitative sexual activity would be raised from 14 to 16 years, to better protect young persons from adult sexual predators.

Serious Gun Crimes

There would be h igher mandatory prison sentences for those who commit serious gun crimes.

In addition, those accused of such crimes would have to show why they should not be kept in jail while awaiting trial.

Impaired Driving

And police would have better tools to detect and investigate drug- and alcohol-impaired driving,

and penalties for impaired driving would be increased.

Moving Forward on Justice Bills

Our Government is moving forward now to ensure that this legislation advances swiftly through the Parliamentary process and is passed into law.

The *Tackling Violent Crime Act* is the centrepiece and the first in a series of new crime bills that will be announced in the near future.

These bills will address areas of pressing concern such as serious drug crime, youth crime, identity theft, and property crime.

Although we accommodate many of the opposition's amendments, the bills were held up in opposition-controlled house committees or the Liberal majority in the Senate for a total of 976 days.

I see no reason why this legislation should not receive Parliament's approval without delay.

If the Opposition allows our Throne Speech to pass, they cannot obstruct our core priorities, including this bill.

And to hold them to account, we will make Bill C-2 a confidence bill.

Conclusion

For any government, there is no greater duty than the protection of its citizens.

And our Government remains unwavering in its determination to keep Canadians safe.

Canadians want action on crime now and that's what we intend to deliver – so that we can build a stronger, safer, better Canada.

Thank you. Now I invite my colleague Minister Blackburn to say a few words...

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